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Postal Service willing to leave St. Paul riverfront HQ

BY TIM NELSON
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The U.S. Postal Service is willing to vacate its towering downtown St. Paul post office to make room for a new transit hub at the old Union Depot across the street, according to a letter from Deputy Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe.

"We have made a determination that relocating our St. Paul mail processing operations to an expanded Eagan [bulk mail center] is a prudent course of action and is in the best interest of the Postal Service, as well as the St. Paul community," Donahoe wrote in a letter today to Fourth District Rep. Betty McCollum.

He proposes selling the building to the city or some other public entity, putting a final decision before the USPS Board of Governors next year and completing the move to Dakota County by 2009.

"There are a number of legal and administrative matters that will need to be resolved," Donahoe wrote.

Local officials hailed the news, a sign that the truck ramp that accommodates about 400 trucks a day will no longer stand in the way of commuter, light and high-speed rail connections to downtown St. Paul. The last passenger train pulled out of the downtown depot in 1971, but the location is still thought prime for a revival of rail transport in the Twin Cities.

"We look forward to working in partnership on this and to making it happen," said Ramsey County Board Chairwoman Victoria Reinhardt, who also sits on the county's Regional Rail Authority. That body likely will take the lead on any transit developments in Lowertown.

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